

## ***George J. Mitchell Oral History Project***

*Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College Library, 3000 College Sta., Brunswick, Maine 04011*  
© Bowdoin College

---

**Richard A. “Rich” Arenberg**  
(Interviewer: *Brien Williams*)

**GMOH# 055**  
December 19, 2008

**Brien Williams:** This is an oral history interview with Rich Arenberg for the George J. Mitchell Oral History Project at Bowdoin College in Maine. We’re in the Senate offices of Senator Carl Levin of Michigan, and today is Friday, December 19, 2008, and I’m Brien Williams. Rich, let’s start with you giving me your full name and spelling.

**Rich Arenberg:** Okay, sure. It’s Richard Arenberg, A-R-E-N-B-E-R-G, middle initial is A, and I was born on October 16, 1945, in Norwich, Connecticut.

**BW:** And your parents’ names?

**RA:** Yeah: Bernard and Mary Arenberg, and they’re still alive and live in Florida now.

**BW:** Good. Tell me just a little bit about your own family political background.

**RA:** Okay, well I’ve been involved in Democratic politics for many years. I was, I did my undergraduate work at Boston University, I was somewhat of a campus activist in the Vietnam War days, and got involved in local politics to an extent in Boston. Worked for, in the campaign of Tom Atkins, who was a, I think the first African American city councilor in Boston and ran for mayor in a very interesting campaign back in, it would have been very late ‘60s I think. And I cut my teeth politically on some of those campaigns, and I had a background in survey research so I did some polling for him and, which I later did for, when I got involved with Paul Tsongas.

I was a graduate student working on a Ph.D. in political science at Boston University, and very much interested in what was going on in Washington. In fact, I interviewed – it’s sort of an interesting coincidence – that I interviewed for a position with Senator Muskie here in Washington, and was in the process of being considered for that position when I met the guy who was going to run the campaign for this young county commissioner in Massachusetts, whose name was Paul Tsongas, who I had never heard of before, and I met Paul, was very taken with him, and got involved in his original congressional campaign in Lowell, Massachusetts, did the polling for that campaign, and a lot of the, well, was the issues director.

And when he was elected to the House I came to Washington with him – that was in the Watergate class of 1974 – and after four years, he’d beaten an incumbent congressman, by the way, in a very interesting campaign, and then after four years he decided to run against the, at least based partially on polling that I’d done, decided to run against the then incumbent senator

from Massachusetts, Ed Brooke, who he defeated in 1978, and I came over to the Senate with him, and I've been working in the Senate staff ever since.

In 1984, when he was, very late '83 or early '84, when he learned that he had cancer and decided that he was going to leave the Senate at that point, that's really when I went to work initially for George Mitchell, in 1984. And it was kind of an interesting process that, it was sort of a learning process for me in coming to recognize the sort of careful decision-making style of, very solid, careful decision-making style of George Mitchell, because when Senator Tsongas first announced that he was, announced to the staff that he was leaving, almost simultaneously I learned that Senator Mitchell was going to have an opening for a chief of staff.

Now, being a seasoned Hill staffer, I knew these jobs open and close very quickly and I had to move quickly, so I very quickly expressed my interest to Senator Mitchell, and I asked Senator Tsongas to approach him on the Senate floor that day and just talk to him about it, because I thought, 'Got to move really quickly here.' And I think that was, I want to say January or February of '84 when that happened.

Well, without dragging through the entire story, I began work for Senator Mitchell as his chief of staff in October of that year. So you can see it was a, quite a considerable process and I hadn't anticipated that it would, that it would be like that. But it really kind of foreshadowed something that I really respect about Senator Mitchell, is the very careful, thoughtful way in which he approaches problem solving and decision making. It's almost one, I often think of it as one brick at a time, you know, very solid.

And I have tremendous admiration for the three men that I've worked for in the Senate – you mentioned that I currently work for Senator Levin – very different men. And there was little about working for Paul Tsongas, who I respected enormously and who was a good friend, that prepared me for my early days with Senator Mitchell. The contrast is interesting I think in that Tsongas was a very intuitive, I would describe him as kind of a visceral, politician. He was very, very candid, more candid I think than any – even outside of politics really – than any political, not only political person but any person I've known. I mean he was very straightforward about things, and if a decision presented itself, or a problem presented itself, he'd say what he thought and he'd make a decision, and if he had to change his mind in two weeks and say, "Oh well, I've learned some new things and I've changed my mind," he was very comfortable with that.

So I came from that, ten years of working with a boss like that, to beginning with Senator Mitchell, who of course had been a federal judge and was a very careful decision maker, and I think had this kind of, and has this kind of almost sense of, I think – I'm not a lawyer but I think they refer to it as *stari decisis* – it's the idea that decisions are built on prior decisions and you don't, one of the first things Senator Mitchell always wanted to know is, "Well what have I done about this before?" or, "What earlier decisions have brought us to this?" And he would be very careful in his decision making, and didn't like to turn the ship around very much once it was headed in a given direction. And for that reason, he was very careful about what direction he wanted to go in.

And I can remember when I first went to work for him, I remember very vividly the first decision I ever brought to him. I mean I knew him a little bit from having been around the Senate for a couple of years while he was here, but, so I brought him, for the first decision, a very sort of carefully argued decision memo which said, "Here are the options, here's my recommendation," you know. And I sort of proudly carried this decision memo into his office, and he read it, and he looked up at me sort of over the top of his glasses and said, kind of furrowed his brow and said, "Why do I have to decide this now?"

And I, my jaw dropped. And I, I really hadn't sort of been confronted with this notion before, that, as I said, I was used to working with somebody like Tsongas who frequently shot from the hip. And I don't say that in a critical way, because his instincts were so outstanding that I often felt like I was skirting around behind him, eventually catching up with finding out he was right all along. But this was obviously a very different style, and I sort of never forgot that first lesson, which was that more judicial notion that decisions ripen, and Senator Mitchell was consistently like that. I worked for him for ten years and I came to expect it and decision memos would go in and sometimes it was a while before they came back out. Or they'd come back out without necessarily a decision. They'd have the checkmark in the upper right hand corner which meant yes, the Senator has read this memo but there wasn't necessarily an instruction attached to that yet.

And I came to value that, it's something that I learned from him, was how to take your time making a decision, and to carefully weigh the factors and to gather the facts. It was a kind of approach to, particularly to political decision making that I hadn't had as much exposure to prior to that. And I think it's served, it's clearly served George Mitchell very well, and so over the years, even after he's left the Senate, it's clear that he's been able to bring that kind of process to bear on very, very difficult questions and problems and arrive at solutions in situations that are very, very trying.

**BW:** When you were preparing decision papers, after this initial experience, did you feel as if he were not, he wasn't really seeking your recommendation, he more wanted the facts and he'd make his own decision, or not? How did that work?

**RA:** Well, I think he did. No, I think he was looking, certainly looking for recommendations, I mean as a factor that went into his decision making. But he certainly wasn't, I mean there are all sorts of, obviously there are all sorts of senators in this body, I mean very different styles. And some of them, quite frankly, skate around on a very thin veneer of the depth of their own involvement in the decisions that they make, in their own knowledge, that don't feel the need to have a very deep knowledge base, they operate on the basis of a lot of staff work. And certainly George Mitchell was the antithesis of that, is the antithesis of that. I mean he's never prepared to go forward on something until he's convinced that he's sort of gotten to bedrock on it, and he'll drill down until he gets there. And so I think a staff recommendation is definitely a factor that goes into that. I think he definitely wants that. But it's not the end of the process, by any means, and I think that there -

In my mind, even though he left the judiciary a long time ago, his demeanor is still, and his operating style is still, very judicial. I often felt as though I was giving him a brief and that he'd disappear into the chambers and at some future date a decision would be, would come down.

Later on, let me just add, later on, when he became the majority leader and we were leadership staff, and other Democratic staff were looking to us to try to figure out what it was that the leader was really thinking and to sort of help them read the tea leaves, and we would frequently have to say things like, "Well," you know, "he hasn't made a decision yet," or, "he's considering this," or, "he's weighing the options," or something. I always felt like other staff around the Senate always thought we were being cute, that we were just kind of being coy about, for whatever reason, for whatever political reasons, we just didn't want to share with them where he was going. But the fact of the matter was, as I've said, in most of these cases he was, he simply was weighing the decision.

**BW:** When you came on board, describe your role as chief of staff.

**RA:** Well, in the Senate the chief of staff is first of all the, sort of the chief administrative officer of a Senate office, which, they differ in sizes depending on the size of the state, and I don't recall exactly how large Senator Mitchell's office was at that point, but something on the order of I would say thirty-five or forty staffers, between Washington and the offices in Maine. And so there's a – and a considerable budget – and so there's a whole administrative element of that job. And the chief of staff is the senator's chief sort of advisor, political advisor and, although there's a legislative director who has responsibility for legislative matters, the chief of staff will, is involved in that kind of decision making as well.

So Senate chiefs of staff are, they tend to be sort of alter egos for the senator often, and depending on the operating style of the particular senator, they frequently work very closely together, they handle the paper flow that goes into the senator's office, and sign off on many of the decisions that don't, that need to be kind of filtered out of the senator's day so that he doesn't have to.

**BW:** So where does an AA fit into all of this?

**RA:** Well it's an alternative title. In the old days, and I'm, it may actually have been my title at that time, I don't remember exactly at what point the titles began to change, but administrative assistant is the old name in the Senate for a chief of staff. And I think at some point the fact that that job title had very different meanings out in the private sector, I think Senate AAs began to gravitate towards chief of staff as a title, and I think now, I think it's, I think virtually every Senate office, the top staffer is identified as the chief of staff, as opposed to administrative assistant.

**BW:** Makes sense.

**RA:** Likewise when, I mean I, my title with Senator Levin is legislative director and deputy chief of staff. I was a legislative director with Paul Tsongas when we first started in the House, but in those days we called the title chief legislative assistant. And at some point, and I sort of resisted the, for whatever reason, I don't know, I sort of resisted the legislative director title, it sounded sort of weird to me when I, when people first started using it. But again, it's become the term of art, and so now every Senate office has its LD.

**BW:** So where were you in your initial stages in the office, in terms of issue responsibilities?

**RA:** With Mitchell?

**BW:** Hmm-hmm.

**RA:** Pretty much I dealt with issues across the board, really depending on what the things were that were, as things came up and became the primary issue that the office was dealing with at a given time, I'd get more deeply involved with it, working with the legislative director and whoever the legislative assistant was that was involved in that area. Later on, in working with Senator Mitchell – we'll come to it – but I worked with him on the Iran-Contra Committee and developed a focus on intelligence issues and national security issues and worked with him on those issues during the time that he was majority leader.

I mean I, I moved from being a legislative director with Tsongas to taking that position as chief of staff with Senator Mitchell, and I think I'm probably unique in the Senate in having gravitated back to the legislative job. It's, some people view it was backsliding of a sort, but it was the interest in legislative issues and in public policy that brought me to Washington in the first place. I viewed working for a senator as kind of a political statement of my own. And although I very much enjoyed the opportunity to do the administrative task, and I appreciated that Senator Mitchell had given me that opportunity, when I saw the chance to move back into the more direct legislative arena, I grabbed that.

I was very much interested in the work that was going to be done on the Iran-Contra Committee, on that Select Committee, and so when he was appointed to that committee I volunteered to, or expressed my interest to him anyway in serving as his – when that committee was set up, each member of the committee appointed a, they called them liaisons, or designees, it's kind of a little different than the normal staff relationship with committees, and I took that role for him. And also simultaneously served as his chief of staff in the, in his role as deputy president pro tem of the Senate, which was sort of an interesting thing. There's a story behind that as well.

**BW:** Hopefully we'll get to it, yeah. When you started in '84, were you being brought in to clean up something, or was it just a handoff?

**RA:** No, it was a handoff. His chief of staff was leaving to do other things, David Johnson, who preceded me, and in fact wound up coming back almost, just about simultaneously – Senator Mitchell was appointed by then-majority leader Byrd as chairman of the DSCC, the

campaign committee, and David agreed to come back as his chief of staff on the DSCC. So, but I, but as chief of staff in the personal office, I was succeeding David, so that was the opening that was there.

And what made it possible for him to take the time that he did in filling the position was that there was a member of his staff at the time, Gayle Cory, who was later, he later appointed as the postmaster general of the, the postmaster of the Senate Post Office. And Gayle unfortunately passed away, but was a wonderful person who had served on the Muskie staff with Senator Mitchell. And although she was his scheduler, she had the kind of long experience and seasoning to be kind of a bridge chief of staff in that period of time, and it gave Senator Mitchell the luxury of taking his time deciding who he wanted to hire for that position.

**BW:** And her title -

**RA:** She was -

**BW:** Personal secretary?

**RA:** I think her title might have been something like executive director or something. But she basically did his scheduling, and a whole lot of other tasks, I mean she was sort of like the maitre d' of the office. She knew everybody in Maine and - I mean that was another thing that was new to me in coming, coming from a state like Massachusetts, a larger state, to the political environment of a Senate representing, a senator representing a much smaller state, the dynamic was very different.

And the very first time I learned that, and of course some of it was unique to Senator Mitchell, too, I remember the first time I traveled through the state with him and it, I mean he literally knew two out of every three people we came across on the street. I mean just everybody came up and said, "Hey George, how 'ya doing?" And he invariably, not only did he know the individual but the conversation was often, "How's your Aunt Mabel and is she still up there in Bangor?" And at times he even managed to pull branches of the family tree out of people's backgrounds that they weren't even all that sure about and they'd say, "Oh yeah, right, he was, that's right, he was my aunt's father's brother-in-law." But George Mitchell knew, he knew all those connections. He was amazing in that regard.

**BW:** I've heard that said of a number of senators, and I wonder if they work at that.

**RA:** Well, I think part of it, yeah, I mean part of it is work, but part of just who he was, and he knew a lot of people in Maine and he just had that kind of personality and memory, and it was truly impressive. And I think it is characteristic of some senators from, more likely to be from smaller states where you can do that sort of thing. I mean now, representing a state like Michigan, it's a physical impossibility, and he, Senator Levin travels the state in a very different fashion, although he's very personable and likes to have one-on-one contact, and there's a lot of that.

You just can't saturate the state in quite the same way. I mean, in a six-year term, I mean Senator Mitchell could probably shake hands with almost everybody in Maine as he traveled around the state and went to town meetings and that sort of thing. And of course a state the size of Michigan, or even Massachusetts, the dynamic's very different.

**BW:** Right. When you started, he was four years into his Senate career, having been appointed in '80, and then not thought he would win election in '82 on his own but in fact turned the tables –

**RA:** That's right.

**BW:** - and fairly solidly won, sixty-one percent I think I recall. Did you have a sense when you went to work with him that this was a potential eventual majority leader?

**RA:** You know, honestly, at the very first starting point when I went to work for him, it hadn't really occurred to me. But it wasn't very far down the road that it became clear that, well, colleagues of his were, would come up to him and suggest to him that he ought to think about it. And clearly, as I say, it wasn't very long after I was first hired that Byrd appointed him as chairman of the DSCC, and then once he set out into that position it was very, his leadership potential was very clear, and everybody recognized it. And of course once that election took place in '86 and he was, had a large part in the, a large role and much of the responsibility for Democrats taking control of the Senate back after what had felt like six years in the wilderness – we were particularly unused to it then. Unfortunately we've had some more periods since then. But, and so there was a, there was kind of a clamor for him to move into the leadership after that victory in '86.

So it became clearer and clearer, and in fact there were senators who would urge him to challenge Senator Byrd for the leadership. And I, I mean I think he felt a considerable amount of loyalty to Senator Byrd for having appointed him chair of the DSCC, and I think he made it clear that he wasn't interested in taking Senator Byrd on. But what happened as '88 approached is that Senator – there had been a faction in the Senate for a number of years that was, that felt that Senator Byrd's style in leading the Senate was, that the Senate had become, for younger members of the Senate, the phrase that was often used was 'a family unfriendly environment' because, even more so, much more so then than now. There were late night sessions; Senator Byrd had really used long sessions into the night, sometimes overnight sessions and so forth, as a tool in managing the Senate. I mean it's still, it's a very difficult place to manage, as of course Senator Mitchell knew and learned, and is still so. I mean it was very true of the 110th Congress that we've just been through, where we broke the record for filibusters, many of which, a lot of legislation wound up on the rocks as a result of that.

One of the tools that Senator Byrd used back then was, if he was having difficulty bringing an amendment to a vote because there was, people were dragging it out and dragging it out, he'd shrug his shoulders and say, "Well okay, we'll stay here until we get to a vote on this." And the

trucks would pull up to the Capitol building and the army cots would be offloaded and we'd have these all night sessions. And they're not completely unknown in the Senate now, but they were more frequent then. And I think for younger members particularly who had families and the, first, the fact that these hours became longer and longer, but secondly, the fact that it was very difficult to predict when this would happen. It was, for senior staff it was a very unpredictable environment, with young kids, it was a very difficult environment to be involved in.

And I think also that Senator Byrd had a leadership style that, by the, in comparison to the style that's evolved since then, I think leadership has been broadened in the Senate, there are more leadership positions, and it's a much more consultative environment. Certainly was for Senator Mitchell, and for Senator Daschle who followed him, and certainly for Senator Reid now. Senator Byrd had an older style of leadership in which control of information was a big, was also another big tool.

And so there was a faction in the caucus that was pressing to have a contest at the beginning. And if I remember correctly, in '86 it would have been, there was a challenge to Senator Byrd by Senator Chiles of Florida, that came very, very late in the game, and Senator Byrd was able to ward it off, but in warding it off he sort of indicated that he, what he wanted was, now that the Democrats were moving back into the majority, that he'd be majority leader again for a couple of years, but sort of, I don't know that he, these leadership battles are a very much senator-to-senator game. So when staff members like myself speculate about this, we're shooting by the seat of our pants to some extent.

But the impression at the time was that Senator Byrd was indicating to other members, or at least implying, that he, if he got two more years as majority leader he might not run in '88 for the leadership again. He changed his mind about that. If in fact he indicated that he changed his mind, or if it was just the way people incorrectly read the tea leaves at the time. Nonetheless, he decided that he was going to run for leader again, and when he did that, Senator Inouye from Hawaii announced that he was going to challenge him for the majority leadership. As soon as he did that, Senator Johnston from Louisiana announced that he would also challenge for it, and it became sort of, it was going to be sort of a three-way race. And over some period of time – and I'd have to go back and refresh my memory, just exactly what the timing was – but when it became clear that this was going to be a real serious challenge, Senator Byrd decided that he was not going to run for reelection as majority leader, since he was able to take the chairmanship of the Senate Appropriations Committee, *and* was president pro tem of the Senate, that he had both a leadership position and a formidable committee chairmanship in the Senate and that he was prepared, ready to step aside as leader. Once he did that, that's when Senator Mitchell decided that he would enter the race for majority leader, and it became a three-way race.

And I think it's, and as I say, Senate races are very much a member-to-member, close to the vest, inside game. But it was very instructive to watch Senator Mitchell approach this contest. I mean he went and met with every Democratic member of the caucus, he went to their offices. And my impression of course, because I wasn't in the room, but my impression was that he sat down with each and every one of them, explained why he wanted to be leader, asked for their support, but

counted votes in a very – again, the characteristic George Mitchell, careful, factual, paid attention to what they said, and didn't count a vote unless it was pretty explicit. And I, I have the impression that if they said, "I'll vote for you, George." He'd say, "On such and such a date? On the first ballot?" something like that.

Because he was always very conservative about what the head count was, and he, and I believe he knew from day one to when those votes were actually cast exactly how many votes he had, and in the end he was exactly right about it. And all of the speculation, virtually all of the speculation that was going on on the outside was way off the mark. I mean, the conventional wisdom was that Inouye was far and away the leader. And then there was a period in August when everybody left town, when Senator Johnston, who knew he was, no doubt knew he was way behind and in third place, stayed in Washington and worked the Washington press and sort of a very sort of public campaign. And you can go back and look at those stories and there are all these stories written about Johnston stock was surging in the leadership race and everything, and I think the ultimate vote probably reflected that not much was really happening except that it was August in Washington and not much was going on and these were the stories and he was churning the water and it was creating this impression.

And so I learned from that a rule of thumb that I've always followed since then, and that is that what's really going on in a leadership race is inversely proportional to the amount of smoke and fury that you see on the outside, because there's no reason to play that outside game if you're winning the inside game.

**BW:** Just one footnote here.

**RA:** Sure.

**BW:** Was, did Byrd leapfrog anyone at Appropriations, was he sort of given that plum?

**RA:** No, oh no-no-no, he's got, he had the seniority to assume it and, yeah, no, he never had to do that. I mean he did do his leapfrogging in his career, he got on the leadership ladder originally by, Ted Kennedy was the Senate whip – and this pre-dates obviously all that we're talking about now – but Senator Byrd challenged him for, when he ran for reelection as whip, and it was kind of a, at the time was kind of a surprise sort of guerilla attack, or was kind of viewed that way, and beat him. And that's when he became the Senate whip, and then ultimately moved up the ladder, so -

**BW:** Let's move on to Iran-Contra.

**RA:** Sure.

**BW:** That's a huge subject.

**RA:** Yeah, sure.

**BW:** And of course not only is it a huge subject, but a huge amount has been written about it.

**RA:** Right, sure.

**BW:** And I thought maybe one way of approaching is just to ask you, starting now, some of your most vivid memories of that.

**RA:** Okay. Well, let me start by, there were really sort of two points at which I felt like I personally played a very significant role in events that ultimately became significant for George Mitchell. And I don't mean to do this to kind of toot my own horn or something, but it's just, because both of them were things in which he ultimately took the steps that were really critically important.

But the first was, when the story first broke he was, I don't recall whether he was in Maine. He was somewhere out of Washington, and I vividly remember calling him and saying the story had just broken about Meese's – I forget, I'm trying to recall exactly how it first came out, but I think it was that Ed Meese was looking into this memo that had come to light which made it clear that there had, that funds from the sale of these missiles in Iran had been used for the Contras, and the story broke with a huge outcry.

And I remember calling Senator Mitchell and saying, "There are probably six or seven Senate committees that have jurisdiction here, that are going to want to jump into this right away, and I have the feeling, in the end, this is going to wind up being the perfect situation for a select committee. And because of your background as a federal judge and so forth, I think you'd be perfect to be the chairman of this select committee. Do you want to approach Senator Byrd? Would you like me to approach the leadership staff? Should we get out ahead of this?"

And it's characteristic of George Mitchell, I mean: a) he thought this was a, he thought I was right about the fact that ultimately this would have to be some sort of special committee because the juris-, there were too many issues here and the jurisdiction cut across too many committees, and the Watergate scandal was still fresh in everybody's memory and everybody remembered the Irvin Committee and how effective it had been in bringing out the truth ultimately. And, but he wasn't willing to be what he saw as presumptuous as I was willing to be in approaching the leader and asking to chair the committee.

So what he was willing to do was go to the leader and say, if a select committee were to be created, he'd very much like to serve on it. And of course, obviously, ultimately that committee, very soon after that the committee was appointed, and Senator Inouye was appointed as the chairman of the committee and Senator Mitchell was appointed to it. He was next in seniority after Inouye on the Democratic side, and was asked by Senator Inouye, he actually played the central role in hiring the senior staff for that committee. He was asked to find a chief counsel and all of that. So that was one point at which I felt like I got the ball rolling, anyway.

The second one was, I think, probably the most famous juncture for Senator Mitchell, and that was when he confronted Oliver North in that famous questioning. And Senator Mitchell made a speech to North in those hearings that, it's been widely quoted and may be among the most famous things that he said as a senator. Well, the way the committee was, had been structured was, for each witness there was assigned a senator on the committee who was, they kind of called them comically the 'designated hitter,' who would be the chief questioner of that witness. And Senator Mitchell had been – and these were all divvied up before the hearings all began – Senator Mitchell had been named as the, quote, 'designated hitter' for Oliver North.

Well, when those hearings opened, always the staff counsels would ask the first series of questions, and then the 'designated hitter,' usually on the second day, would begin asking questions. Well in the North case, North very famously stood up to the committee when he was asked questions by the chief counsels of the committee, and he stood up to them and he wore his Marine uniform with all of his medals, and kind of famously put the committee back on its heels and kind of, there was a sense after that first day or two that the Iran-Contra Committee was in full retreat and that North had kind of won the day.

And there was a weekend, and then Monday morning was the time in which the 'designated hitter' was going to begin his questioning of Oliver North – Senator Mitchell in this case. And so we had a weekend in which to prepare, and I remember going to Senator Mitchell's house and we sat down to talk about the questioning of Oliver North. Now, as we've already said, Senator Mitchell was a distinguished federal judge, and he had been a prosecutor, and his instinct was to do a very careful cross examination, as you would do in court, to elicit the weaknesses in the argument that Oliver North had put out there. I mean, to bring out the many ways in which he violated the law and had taken inappropriate actions, clearly inappropriate actions. And, so that Senator Mitchell's instinct was to put together that kind of cross examination that a good lawyer would do.

Well my entire contribution here, but I like to think that it was crucial, was to suggest to him that what North had been doing up until then was basically filibustering, and not answering questions, in fact, but going off on these long tirades, prepared tirades, speeches that he'd prepared and so forth. And we weren't in a court of law, there really wasn't a way to, in front of national television cameras, to bring that, to reel that back in. And so I suggested to Senator Mitchell that what he really needed to do was to counter that by making the kind of statement to North, rather than giving him the opportunity with that first question, at which point he was going to lose control of the situation, but to himself address the points that North had made up until that point to make his case, and follow that with questions, if time permitted that.

I think ultimately that turned out to be an important insight, I think. I mean it looks good in retrospect particularly because Senator Mitchell wrote the speech that he did, and he did write that himself, he sat down and he thought about it in great depth and I think raised precisely the right questions. And I think it's, it's rightly a, it was a turning point in the Iran-Contra hearings.

I think that the other thing I'd add about that time was that, one of the crucial decisions that was

made in the private decision making of the committee was the decision as to whether or not to provide immunity to Oliver North in order to get him, to require him to testify before the committee, as opposed to taking the Fifth Amendment. And I think Senator Mitchell felt very strongly that they should hold the line and that it was, it was dangerous to give him immunity because that although the independent counsel was being very careful in terms of trying to protect himself from the testimony that was being given in public, that ultimately a court was very likely to see it differently, as it ultimately did. But the decision was made otherwise, and I think that's one, in my view anyway, I really don't, I haven't talked to him about this, I don't know how, whether he would take the same view. But I think that that was a crucial departure at which, I think had Senator Mitchell been chairman of the committee and guiding that decision that it might have gone differently and that the, the whole course of the, of what the committee was able to learn and ultimately what was later to happen in the court – I mean you'll recall that Oliver North ultimately *was* convicted in a court of law, but then that conviction was overturned, largely on the grounds that the testimony that, that it was impossible for him to have a fair trial because of the testimony that was given in public in the Senate hearings, in the congressional hearings.

**BW:** That was always baffling to me, that there was these three bodies basically looking at the same thing, the Tower Report initially.

**RA:** Right, right.

**BW:** Then the committees, and then the council. And it got baffling for the public.

**RA:** You know, in these public scandal situations it's come up time and time again, there is this conflict between the interest in justice and seeing to it that wrongdoing is punished and that crimes are punished and that the judicial system, you know - And there is this competing interest that, the public's right to know, and also the need to sometimes, the need to bring these things out in the public and the political arena as a way of cleansing and righting the, you know. And I think it's easy to forget now the extent to which President Reagan was, because the opinion of him subsequent to that, was able to come back considerably. That it's easy to forget how hamstrung he was, and how hamstrung the Reagan administration was at that time, with the scandal exploding all around them. And there was a perceived need, and I think rightly so, that it was very important for the Congress to get to the, to get the facts out, to find out exactly what had happened.

There certainly was a consciousness at the time, certainly by good legal minds like George Mitchell, that this was going, ran the risk of endangering future prosecution. And we face that again, and there is, these conflicts come up all the time, and sometimes Congress says, "Well we're going to withhold and we'll wait so as not to interfere with public prosecution." And you see things like, I mean right now in the current story, you know, you've got the president elect saying that he's withholding coming forward with what his, what he's learned about what the transition team may have known, what interaction they may have had with the governor of Illinois, because the prosecutor has asked him to withhold for a period of time. So these

conflicts come up all the time, and I think it was a particularly difficult one with Iran-Contra, and I think people can sometimes still go back and argue about whether the right decisions were made there.

**BW:** When the decision was made who was going to the 'designated hitter' for whom, did you and Senator Mitchell know that you probably got the biggest star, so to speak?

**RA:** Well, I think it was clear that he was going to be one of the crucial people. I don't think we knew, I mean if you go back and look at the factual record of what it is we know today about Iran-Contra, a tremendous amount of that information really was provided by Oliver North, and the questioning of Oliver North, and the documents of Oliver North. And of course we wonder to this day whether, what we know, all of what occurred is accurately known because of that fact, and because ultimately what was viewed as the central question: what did the president know? I'm not sure that anyone knows for certain what the answer to that question was. I mean sometimes, frankly, it looked like it wasn't clear that Ronald Reagan in the later years knew for sure what he had known.

**BW:** Because of his disease.

**RA:** Yeah, yeah, no, I think that's right. I think that's right. And I think that, and because, the other major player, Poindexter, I mean he, I mean he held a line to the end and it was, no one can ever be entirely certain what it was that he told the president and what he didn't tell the president.

**BW:** That weekend –

**RA:** Yeah, sure.

**BW:** - just prior to Mitchell's examination of North, was it just the two of you there, or there was a team?

**RA:** No, there were others. Yeah, no, there were others there. Martha Pope, who was, at that time she was I believe our legislative director, and she later was the secretary of the Senate and sergeant-at-arms of the Senate, and a long time aide of Senator Mitchell was there. And Jamie Kaplan, who was our, he was one of the associate counsels to the committee. It was another way in which the Iran-Contra Committee was put together, it was kind of an odd structure, but the committee named a chief counsel, and then all of the associate counsels: each one was nominated by a different member of the committee. And so it created this sort of odd structure where they all worked under the chief counsel, but they all also had sort of a, kind of a boss, a patron, so to speak.

And some of them were better able to work both those roles than others were and were, as a result were more or less useful to the chief counsel as real aides, whereas some of the associate counsels really functioned more as their bosses' staffer on the committee. But in our case, Jamie

Kaplan, who is an attorney from Maine, and Senator Mitchell knew him from his days as U.S. attorney I think and brought him down here to serve as the counsel, so he was there as well. And as I recall, you know, later on I worked with Senator Mitchell and Senator Cohen on the book they wrote about Iran-Contra called *Men of Zeal*, and there's a section in that, that chapter on Oliver North – the way the book is organized, each chapter is centered around each witness, and although the book is written together, there were a couple of points where there was an individual story that needed to be told and so they kind of went off and told it in italic, literally in italics. And Senator Mitchell tells a little bit of that story about that weekend.

**BW:** The choice of chapter titles for that book, you all must have fun coming up with some of those.

**RA:** Well it's, you know, it's funny that you bring that up, because I often talk about that as a reflection of what it was like to work with Senator Mitchell and Senator Cohen on that book. I have great respect for both, obviously for Senator Mitchell, and I have great respect for Bill Cohen as well, like him very much. And I often talk about those chapter titles, that's why it's funny that you brought them up. Because it was, in many ways, my role in working with them on the book was to serve as kind of a bridge; I'd go back and forth. And the way the book was written, they divvied up the chapters and they would write the chapter that they were going to write on yellow legal pages and everything, and bring it back. And one of my tasks really was to go back and forth between them and kind of reconcile, bring it together.

And it could be very difficult because the writing styles were, I mean the book ultimately had to read as if it had one author, and yet their initial writing styles were so diametrically opposed. And the titles really reflect that because look, George Mitchell, I keep saying he was a federal judge, but there's a lot about his persona that reflects that. And his writing style is like that; short, declarative statements, very concrete, solid, very clear. People would always tell me they'd go read his speeches on the floor in order to see the clearest exposition of an issue because he did that, he'd work at it and polish it. Bill Cohen, on the other hand, had a clear writing style but very florid. I mean he's, he's a novelist, he's a poet, he's had books of poetry printed, I mean published, and so he loves to elaborate.

Well, it was a challenge to get them to agree on text, but where it really became almost comical was these chapter titles, because as far as George Mitchell was concerned, the chapters ought to be titled chapter one, chapter two, chapter three, and chapter four. I mean, a chapter title was tangential to what it was you, the chapter was about, and it was just a way of numbering it. Whereas Bill Cohen would call me at two o'clock in the morning, the middle of the night I'd get these phone calls and he'd say, "Hey, I got a great idea, how about 'Three Blind Meese' for the chapter on Ed Meese?" I don't even remember whether that one made it through the, to the, off the cutting room floor, but you know.... And it was often left to me to go back and try to sell these chapter titles to George Mitchell, which was quite an experience.

So that's why I enjoy the fact that you brought that up as a question. I think they are, they are interesting titles. They were mostly the handiwork of Bill Cohen.

**BW:** After Iran-Contra then at some point you took this position as chief of staff for the deputy and, what was that all about?

**RA:** Right, yeah, it was sort of, it was, as I, I think it was mostly simultaneous with doing the Iran-Contra. And the way that came about was – and it's sort of an interesting story – after the '86 election when Mitchell had been the chairman of the DSCC, there was almost universal acclaim in the Democratic caucus that he belonged in the leadership, and I think Senator Byrd held that view as well, that he wanted him to continue to be in the leadership, but there wasn't a leadership post open.

And in those days, I don't think they've held to this necessarily since, I could be wrong, but the chairman of the DSCC would not continue to be chairman into his own election cycle, and Mitchell was going to be up in '88 so he was going to give up the committee. I'm not sure, it's a lot of hard work and it takes a lot of time and I don't know one way or the other whether he would have wanted to continue in it or not. But in any event, he was leaving that post and there wasn't another leadership post to move into. Since that time, they've kind of, leadership posts in the Democratic caucus have kind of proliferated and there's a lot more leadership positions now that they broke up the DPC into three different pieces and they created a lot of, they sort of democratized the leadership somewhat. But at that point there were fewer leadership posts and there wasn't an opening.

So one of the things, and I think probably it was Senator Byrd or his staff that came up with this idea, but they went back and there was this, it's a standing order of the Senate. Now, standing orders are resolutions that have been passed by the Senate, they have the same status as Senate Rules, they're binding on the Senate, they're in the Senate rule book, and there was one that stated that – and there's a back story to this, too – that former vice presidents of the United States, subsequently elected to the Senate, were, would be deputy president pro tem of the Senate. There was this position, it provided staff, it provided an office in the Capitol, it was a leadership post.

Now the reason that existed was that when, after he was vice president, when Hubert Humphrey came back to the Senate it was, came back to the Senate as a senator, he – and I don't remember whether it was as soon as he got back or shortly thereafter – he began to, he either announced or he made it known that he was going to challenge Senator Byrd for the leadership of the Senate; he wanted to be majority leader.

Well, Senator Byrd was able to beat that back, and I don't know whether it was part of the process of convincing Senator Humphrey to back off of the challenge, or whether it was a sweetener for having been frustrated in that effort or exactly how it happened, but this special order, this standing order was written and passed by the Senate. So Byrd knew about this, and Humphrey, and only Humphrey, had been deputy president pro tem. So when this problem arose, they dusted that off and they amended that standing order, and if you look in the rule book today you'll see that there is a second provision that says for that particular, just for that

particular Congress, that the position shall be held by any senator designated by the Senate to be deputy president pro tem. And for that Congress, that was George Mitchell.

So there have only been two senators in history that have held that position, and only two chief of staff to the deputy president pro tem, historically, in the Senate, and Humphrey's the one and Mitchell is the other. And that left me as one of the few people who knew when, after Paul Wellstone died in that plane crash and Mondale entered that race in Pennsylvania, I called Mondale's campaign staff and said, "I don't know how many people know it, and probably Senator Mondale doesn't know it, but if he's elected, when he's elected" – we all thought he was going to win – "When he's elected to that Senate seat from Minneapolis he'll immediately go into the Senate leadership, because there is a standing order of the Senate that says that vice presidents elected to the Senate shall be deputy president pro tem, so he'll get an office in the Capitol and staff and he'll be deputy president pro tem."

**BW:** And what was the work load?

**RA:** Well that's the thing, there is no, there, I mean aside from acting in the president pro tem's stead, kind of ceremonially, like maybe signing a bill or something when it's, before it's sent down to the White House, there is no proscribed role. Now having said that, what we thought at the time going in was, after all, Senate leadership positions are what you make of them, at least in part. I mean there's no rule book anywhere that describes the role of the Senate majority leader, for that matter. He's not in the Senate Rules, he's not in the Constitution, it's a creature of the caucus and Senate precedence and, that they have established this role and that this role has gathered so much importance and power. But that's sort of the point; it is what was made of it. And so going into it we thought that there were conceivable roles in providing, in helping to strengthen the leadership in the caucus and on the Senate floor and so forth, and ways to be helpful to the majority leader that Senator Mitchell would be able to forge.

What happened in fact, first of all it was simultaneous with Iran-Contra, so we were real busy with that and this was sort of on a sidetrack for a while. But secondly, what then soon happened was this leadership battle that we've already talked about broke out, and he was running for majority leader. So suddenly it really wasn't in his interest to start forging a role, the danger of stepping on people's toes or anything like that. There really wasn't any reason to try to expand the role of this 'deputy president pro tem' and redefine it, because he was focused on running for majority leader. So it, I mean, to this day it really, it hasn't been fully fleshed out what a deputy president pro tem will in fact wind up doing in the future.

**BW:** Did you spend some pretty lonely days in the office over there, or not?

**RA:** Yeah. Well, yeah, it was, yeah, I mean I got to occupy a really nice office in the Capitol building, and certainly he was, look, he's a very active member of the Senate and he certainly knows how to use staff, and so he kept me very busy. But in terms of anything that I could describe as officially a function of having been chief of staff to the deputy president pro tem, you know, there wasn't much shape to that.

**BW:** Who was the president pro tem at that time, do you recall?

**RA:** It would have been John Stennis, I think, yeah.

**BW:** And was there any interaction between yours and –

**RA:** Not much, yeah, not much. I mean, I think it was, I think it was viewed by the caucus as a way of moving George Mitchell into the leadership, and it was, I think it was sort of viewed by others as a placeholder. I mean it was a recognition of what he'd done as chairman of the DSCC and that some day he would be whip or leader, or. It was recognition that he was leadership timber, so he was leader without portfolios I guess, really. And left to our own devices, absent the events that followed, we probably would have filled out that portfolio in some fashion, but as I've said, as events unfolded it didn't really have a role.

**BW:** So I think that brings us to '88 when he became majority leader.

**RA:** Yeah.

**BW:** And your step into this national security role.

**RA:** Right, right. Well one of the things, one of the things that we learned, I think that Senator Mitchell learned during the Iran-Contra experience was that there was, that maybe hadn't been so, it hadn't been so clearly identified previous, was the danger that the whole world of covert intelligence activity, and the fact that the reforms that had been put in place by the Church Committee, that it gave the president and the CIA the latitude to carry out highly, when there were highly sensitive covert operations that they felt were so, that they were so highly classified that briefing the entire Intelligence Committee even, which had been created by the Church reforms to provide oversight to the Intelligence community, Congressional oversight, that when these things that were so sensitive occurred, that there was the alternative of informing what they refer to as the 'Gang of Eight,' which is the chairman and vice chairman of the two Intelligence committees and then the majority leader and minority leader of the Senate, and the speaker and minority leader in the House, so those eight figures.

Well, they're briefed on covert oper-, they're briefed on these covert operations, they can't take any notes, or if they do take notes the CIA will take them away with them when they're done. There's no staff in the room, so they, they're in a, I want to say a particularly vulnerable position. And this is, I think this is still a problem. I mean we still see that problem today, where things, Intelligence matters come to light after the fact and the Intelligence community, the answer will be, or the White House will say, well, but we briefed Capitol Hill on this, we went up there, we informed, the majority leader was fully informed.

And this is a circumstance where these things haven't been fully staffed out. And even, not that staff has all this wisdom that members don't have, but I mean senators have staffs because they

need people to dig into the facts, ask the questions, flesh things out, raise issues, help them in that decision making process. And when it's merely a question of coming up, sitting down one-on-one with the director of Central Intelligence and having him say, "Well we have this operation going on here and we're doing this and that and the other thing and the president wanted to make certain that you were briefed, and we're briefing only the eight leaders because this is highly classified and highly sensitive and you can't inform the Intelligence Committee or other members of the Senate or the rest of the Congress or anybody else."

And so one of the things that Senator Mitchell, when he became leader, was very much aware of was the need to have kind of an ongoing relationship, liaison relationship with the Intelligence community, and with the Senate Intelligence Committee, so that the leadership was better informed in kind of what was going on in these, what they refer to as 'black boxes.' There was still going to be these highly specialized situations maybe where there was just a presidential finding and a determination that only these eight individuals could be informed. But he wanted to have much more of an ongoing presence. And because I had been through all this experience with him on Iran-Contra and so forth that seemed to him, and to me, to be a very valuable role and so I did that for him while he was majority leader.

**BW:** And that was the position you had right through to the end of his Senate -

**RA:** Right, right, until, right, until he announced he was leaving and I went to work for Senator Levin.

**BW:** Just in general then, what was your activity, what were you doing during that period?

**RA:** Well I was, I worked very closely with the Senate Intelligence Committee, with George Tenet who was, at that time was the staff director at the -, and with Senator Boren who was then the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, and was able to keep the majority leader very current, very much informed in what was going on in those areas that, where he could be ultimately left with the responsibility for knowing but would in the ordinary course of events not necessarily know what was going on.

One of the interesting sidebars that that got me into was this whole issue of the, you may recall of hearing about the so-called congressional bunker. This was an artifact of the Cold War, that there was this bunker that was built under the Greenbrier Hotel out in West Virginia, during the Eisenhower administration actually, and had been secretly maintained there over all those years. Very closely, it was a very closely, or was thought to be a very closely kept secret, that only the majority leader and minority leader of the Senate and the speaker of the House and the chairman of the Appropriations Committee knew about, and it was, the funding for that was hidden for years and years in one of the appropriations bills, sort of built in there for a different apparent reason, you know. And there was this very extensive facility that, it was expected that Congress would go to in the event of an imminent nuclear attack, and secrecy was critical because it was, although it was built to, to filter out fallout and all of those things, it was not built in a way to sustain a direct hit, so that if the Soviet Union would have attacked that particular shelter it was

going to be useless. So that the secrecy was very important and the notion was that members of Congress would be, when there was an imminent threat that they would go to members of Congress, all these procedures laid out, and they would put them on a train out of Union Station and it would go directly to West Virginia and they would disappear into this hole in the ground.

And because it was fully in existence and everything, it really was a very kind of inexpensive, to keep it operating was a very inexpensive thing, and not much attention was paid to it. And again, this was totally unstaffed. I mean there were one or two people and the architect at the Capitol's office who knew about it. The Senate sergeant-at-arms didn't even know about it, there was just these few leaders. And when Senator Mitchell came into office he was briefed on this, and one of the first things we did was, one of the first things he did was brief, was see to it that briefed into it was one staff member for each of these figures. So for the first time, we went to the facility, we began to do liaison with the White House and to understand what were the plans, what were the plans that were involved here and what was it going to mean, and what did it look like and so forth. And, because it's not something that a majority leader was ever going to have the opportunity to take the time to go and do and all of this spade work to figure it out.

Well it wasn't very long into Senator Mitchell's term as majority leader that the cover got blown by the *Washington Post* and it became public and ultimately they made the decision that it, that the *Post* was going to go ahead and publish and so it was dismantled, it was sold, I guess sold back to the Greenbrier, or I'm not sure, gifted to them, I'm not sure exactly how that played out.

But one of the things that was clear when we went out there for the first time was that although it was an impressive and fascinating operation, in great depth, it had been thought out and everything, there were the medical needs, the food, dormitory facilities, everything, I mean it was a fascinating facility, and how it had been very ingeniously built into the ground there. And there in fact was, I mean there was this, there's this huge vault door that's several feet thick that could be, that was swung closed, and that it was actually part of the public space that was used in the basement of the Greenbrier, that was used for large events and for expositions and everything like that, that once the doors were closed and everything was part of the underground facility. And you just couldn't tell it. I mean it was very ingeniously done and it had been kept, in Washington had been kept a very, one of the best kept secrets on Capitol Hill for all those years. It subsequently, once it became public knowledge, it became very clear that in that town in West Virginia it was a very badly kept secret, and over time people had sort of figured this out, what was going on. But, so it's kind, it's, I don't mean to get too far off on that tangent, but it was kind of a, it was kind of a fascinating story.

But the one thing about getting staffed up, getting a few staff people in there to look at it was, it was very clear from the congressional perspective that putting a hundred senators into that hole in the ground and expecting the Senate to be able to function with the resources that were there, I mean they tried hard, they had the, there were, they thought, what they imagined would be the right books and the right records and that sort of thing, but it's not the same as knowing what it is that really makes the Senate tick.

And when I came back from there, one of the first things I did is, I had a personal meeting with Senator Mitchell and told him, "If the whistle ever goes off and the Senate goes there, I'm not going, because simply, I'll stay here and deal with the nuclear weapons because that's preferable to being the one or two staff people in the ground with a hundred senators, who's responsible for what's here and what isn't here." The notion of being the one staff person who was responsible for all of this was not something I wanted to do.

**BW:** With the background of yours and Senator Mitchell's experience with Iran-Contra –

**RA:** Yes.

**BW:** - and how haywire things could get in the security realm, just generalize about over the years that you were both involved in these Intelligence issues, what your take was on it.

**RA:** Well, I definitely don't want to speak for him in that area. I mean, I always had a very high level of skepticism. I think he had a healthy skepticism too, about the usefulness of covert action. I mean there, I don't want to be too universal in saying that it's never a good idea in a democratic society, but I think, I think – *he* was very clear about the reasons why he thought that Iran-Contra went wrong, and that one of the advantages of democracy, I think he's been very public about this, is his view that decisions don't take place in secret, and so, that they get vetted and they get, and there's a lot of voices and it's very messy. But one of the great weaknesses of totalitarian societies is that a very few people make the decisions, and if they go wrong, they can go very wrong, go very haywire for a long time. And I think a lot of the fissures behind the collapse of the Soviet Union demonstrate that.

So he I think was, I think he was skeptical of the usefulness of a lot of covert operation. And given the opportunity I had for some time to kind of observe some of this, I think I was probably even more skeptical, that too often that secrecy, that you wind up wondering why things are secret, and who the secrets are being kept from, and that in the instances of some of these covert actions, the targets certainly knew that they were going on. So it wasn't from them, I mean there is, in the whole Intelligence world there is this, I mean there is this idea that, the phrase 'deniability,' I mean there is this notion that you protect the ability to deny something, even if everybody knows it's happening. If you haven't accepted the responsibility that that's, that has some value, you know, the kid who said, "Yeah, there's cookie crumbs all over my face but I didn't, I never had my hand in the cookie jar, Mom."

But in addition to that I think one of the things that really has to be guarded against, is that covert action is not being kept from the public simply because it's embarrassing or politically more difficult, or there's all sorts of reasons why it can be easier to do things in secret than to acknowledge them in public. And certainly in the world of diploma-, to be fair, it isn't just political expediency, but in the world of diplomacy, sometimes it's very inconvenient to acknowledge that the nation, that the country is doing this, that or the other thing, even if it isn't all that sinister. It's just, it's not, it's maybe not all that diplomatic.

So there are justifications for these things, but that's got to be put on the scale, and the other side of the scale is that these things, the decision making for these things, are taking place in a very closed environment. And I always felt that they were, for that reason, you had to approach them skeptically, and also that for that reason they were maybe too often not all that successful.

**BW:** Did George Mitchell lead any legislative effort to make changes in the structure or practices?

**RA:** I think, yeah, I think he definitely pressed for opening that process up. I mean I think, for example, we talked before about the Gang of Eight, and I think he was, he, when those situations occurred he would very typically press to have them opened up to a broader group, to the full Intelligence Committee. And he, he was always interested in opening up the decision making process as much as was possible, consistent with the nature of what these matters were. You know, he was always, he wanted to retain the select nature of the Senate Intelligence Committee and the fact that because the way it was constructed was with six-year terms for senators and they were rotated through there, and he felt that was a good thing because it meant that there was always fresh blood moving into this whole business of doing oversight.

The Senate has since changed that so that now it is constructed more like a standing committee with fixed membership. I mean the other side of that coin was the problem that when you had rotating membership, it was more difficult to have the kind of institutional memory on the committee that gave it, that helped to, with leverage in dealing with the entrenched Intelligence community, and that if a large number of the members on the committee were green all the time, it was harder for them to carry out the kind of tough oversight that congressional committees, when they're effectively performing oversight, can do. So it was kind of a tradeoff, but.

**BW:** We're running out of time here. How do you think George Mitchell will be remembered, as time goes on?

**RA:** Well, I think certainly, he'll certainly be remembered as one of the most effective members of, leaders of the United States Senate, as somebody who was a voice of reason, who was very effective in the partisan wars but, at the same time, understood the value of reaching across the aisle and getting things done and finding legislative solutions. I mean, I think that's something that we've thought about a lot since, I've thought about a lot since. The Senate's become more and more polarized as time has gone on, and it's more and more difficult to legislate in this body. And we're at a very interesting point in history right now where we've got an incoming president who's certainly articulated the desire to do that, and people have suggested that maybe he'll be the first post-partisan president. But I think the forces of polarization in this body now are so great that it, it will not only take the president, but a lot of great leadership in this body if that's going to be reversed, and I think that remains to be seen.

But I think Senator Mitchell was able to do a lot of that, and I think he recognized it. I think given the choice between solving a problem and having an effective issue, wedge issue, he would almost always choose the trying to get the solution. He wasn't always successful in that, I

mean we're, I mean the health reform battle was case in point, I mean he tried mightily and there'll be another try again in this era, I think. But I think as time has gone on, more often than not now, we see both caucuses in the Senate choose the issue over the solution, compromise too often is viewed as a dirty word, and he certainly knew how to forge that kind of compromise and I think that's a very important legacy. And of course he's done nothing but add to that in the years beyond his Senate career.

**BW:** Good, thanks.

**RA:** Thank you.

End of Interview